

Decalogue for the Sharing Group

1. Meetings are led by the Holy Spirit through Mary.
2. Purpose of the meeting:
 - To become aware of my weaknesses and the truth of being loved by God
 - To respond to the desire to deepen my faith
 - To be open to my brothers and sisters in the group
 - To share different experiences of my faith and how God is present in my life
3. When I go to the meeting, I will pray to God for others and myself.
 - Prayer of empty hands or that of the tax collector is recommended.
4. I will remember that I am God's child who has the right to trust and await miracles.
5. As a participant in our meeting I will:
 - Serve others and not count my own merits
 - Create the atmosphere of calm, focus/concentration and openness
 - Not impose on others my ways of thinking, reacting and perceiving
 - Avoid giving advice or solving others' problems
 - Speak from my personal "I" rather than use such terms as "you, we, us, people, we should, others do this."
 - Avoid discussion and criticism
6. By keeping what is shared in the meeting confidential, I will preserve each participant's freedom to share openly and protect their dignity as a child of God.
7. I will not be afraid of moments of silence, since I or somebody else may need time to reflect. Moments of silence provide us with unique opportunities for prayer and entrustment to God.
8. I will remember to attentively listen to what my brother or sister is saying in order to help them in the process of sharing.
9. When I give a witness talk or share my faith, God's grace is not only given to me but it is being multiplied and given to others.
10. Above all, God expects from me humility and openness. Even one person who is humble and open to God can create an appropriate climate during a given meeting that will spread to all participants. The most important and desirable goal is not the format of the meeting, but it is to be open to God's grace and presence.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 323; No. 1477, footnote: 89 Indulgentiarum doctrina, 5. www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection: holiness for the poor*. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2016). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

May 7, 2023 ~ Fifth Sunday of Easter ~ Year A Spiritual Reflection on Sunday's Readings

Prepared by:
Families of Nazareth Movement USA
Communion of Life with Christ through Mary

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I	Acts 6:1-7
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19
Reading II	1 Pt 2:4-9
Gospel	Jn 14:1-12

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dearest Father, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, Who calls me as His own.

My Jesus, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

Holy Spirit, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

Blessed Mother, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2010

Spiritual Reflection

“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.” Jn 14:12

We have, perhaps, imagined ourselves better than others through our apostolic works or our knowledge, but then, in descending the dark tunnel of this way of imperfection, a light appears “in the night.” With a brighter clarity than before, it allows us to see the spiritual pride hidden behind our actions, together with our innate weakness, our superficiality, and our immense egoism. We counted on our natural virtues to climb the ladder of human perfection and we did not see (as it was hidden from our eyes) the spiritual pride that was clinging to our being, heart, and soul. And so it is in descending that we begin to really know ourselves and it causes deep feelings of distress and anguish.

It is possible that after many years, to our dismay, we realize that our ladder has been a mistake, and that our search for natural virtue and the “perfect journey” in our own eyes, together with our “soul searching,” has only aggravated this subtle pride. We discover that we have to change ladders and that, instead of climbing, we need to descend. . .

To descend into this abyss of our misery is not at all peaceful. All our plans crumble. We are completely disconcerted, and we tremble like children alone in the night. It is then that the long fight begins between despair and hope, and the Evil One murmurs insidiously that our life is of no value, that all we have accomplished is meaningless, and that God cannot love such a proud and miserable creature. This is the moment when everything crumbles and we must fall to our knees, not only spiritually but also physically. We must become like children again and acknowledge our misery. It is in this way of littleness that we experience that God is close to the brokenhearted who, at the bottom of the ladder, cry out with hope, but he distances himself from those who climbed the ladder draped in the self-sufficiency of their works and virtues.

This way of weakness and imperfection is open to all the wounded, the poorly loved, and all who suffer from their weaknesses as they unceasingly fall again and again, but in their misery keep a thirst for holiness, a great desire for God that no human happiness, no pleasures, have ever satisfied. In the depths of descent into their misery, a light shines in the darkness and becomes a beacon of hope in the darkness of the senses and spirit. . .

To be reduced to nothing, to see our ugliness, to find ourselves at the lowest rung of the ladder, for this we must descend into the night and accept the pain of the purification of our ego.

The purification of apostles is sometimes greater than of monks and nuns. We need to see clearly the true motivation behind our works, even the apostolic ones, and this is sometimes dreadful. . .

In his Spiritual Exercises, Saint Ignatius of Loyola said that the true disciples of Jesus, those who desire to be at the service of their eternal King and universal Lord, would offer themselves entirely to the task (no. 97), but would mainly imitate Jesus “in bearing any injury, disgrace, and poverty (no. 98), because “through all these things humility is acquired, and through humility all the other virtues” (no. 146). Therefore, for Saint Ignatius, it is impossible to undertake a real apostolic action which is valuable and fruitful if this action is not inspired by a humility similar to that of Jesus. If so many works we have undertaken produce so few lasting results, could it not be that we have forgotten humility and the cross? Indeed, we have difficulty believing in the fruitfulness of the cross, we reject or ignore it, and we seek more spectacular results and the praise of men who flatter our ego.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp. 32-34, 72

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 323** Divine providence works also through the actions of creatures. To human beings God grants the ability to co-operate freely with his plans.
- 1477** "This treasury [Communion of Saints] includes as well the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the prayers and good works of all the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by his grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. In this way they attained their own salvation and at the same time cooperated in saving their brothers in the unity of the Mystical Body." ⁸⁹

Questions for Reflection

1. What good works of Christ do I desire to pursue?
2. What apostolic action that I have undertaken has failed to produce lasting results? What is Jesus telling me?
3. What does it mean for me to entrust myself in my weakness and imperfection to Mary as a mother? How can I find Jesus through the heart of Mary?

Prayer after Sharing

Thank you, God, for allowing me to see the truth about my weaknesses and how it calls upon the abyss of your merciful Love.